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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3072
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 1115
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 0735
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 4757
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 8619
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 4667
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 000187

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PL](#) [EZ](#) [RU](#) [FI](#)

SUBJECT: FINLAND: MISSILE DEFENSE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OUTREACH

REF: A. HELSINKI 162

[1](#)B. HELSINKI 144

[1](#)C. EMBASSY HELSINKI - PEKALA EMAIL 7 MARCH 2007

[1](#)D. STATE 30480

[1](#)E. STATE 21640

Classified By: POLCHIEF GREGORY THOME FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) The public reaction in Finland to US missile defense plans in Eastern Europe and Russian misrepresentations of them have been largely muted. Several editorials and comments from leading politicians appeared in the immediate aftermath of Putin's Munich speech, but very few of these directly addressed the missile defense issue. (Many even acknowledged the positive impact of SecDef Gates' measured response.) The lack of public commentary is somewhat odd, given that Finland will hold parliamentary elections on March 18 and candidates have been eagerly opining (oftentimes inaccurately) on everything from the trans-Atlantic relationship to cluster bombs to the War on Terror. Given the uninformed or unhelpful commentary that has emerged regarding these issues, we are pleased that missile defense has run largely under the media's radar screen.

[1](#)2. (C) The GOF, for its part, has made clear that missile defense is not a matter for Finland to address, but rather a bilateral issue between the Czech and Polish Governments and the US. Senior Finnish officials have welcomed wide discussions of the issue within NATO and have thanked us for sharing information with key non-NATO partners such as Finland. In response to our demarche (Ref E), Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja also issued a helpful statement "rejecting" Russian misrepresentations and threats against Poland and the Czech Republic (see Refs A-C).

[1](#)3. (C) Thus far, we have focused our outreach efforts on ensuring that the missile defense issue does not blossom into a campaign controversy and on ensuring that key players have the facts. Thus far, in addition to briefing MFA officials, we have:

-- privately briefed candidates and political strategists in the Center, SDP, and Green parties;

-- shared our demarche points with key advisors in the office of the Prime Minister;

-- shared facts with the acting foreign editor of Helsingin Sanomat, Finland's largest and most influential daily;

-- and laid out US views to a senior researcher at the Helsinki University's Aleksanteri Institute, one of the largest Russia-focused think tanks in Europe.

¶4. (C) Going forward, Embassy believes that it is best to continue to brief key opinion makers behind-the-scenes, rather than to raise the missile defense issue publicly during election season and risk making an issue out of what has been a non-issue.

¶5. (U) Overall Embassy POC for missile defense issues is PolChief Gregory Thome, tel.: 358-9-6162-5478; unclass e-mail: thomegd@state.gov.
HYATT